

# Everyday Humanitarianism in Refugee-affected Areas

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## Everyday Humanitarianism in Refugee-Affected Areas

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### Overview

For over a decade, Tanzania has hosted refugees fleeing conflict in neighboring countries like Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, with the refugee crisis increasingly underfunded and security concerns rising, the government has taken a more restrictive stance on refugee hosting. In Kigoma, policies and laws now enforce total encampment, limiting the freedoms that refugees once had to move beyond camp boundaries. Activities like vegetable cultivation and small trading within the camps have also been restricted, reducing refugees' ability to support themselves. As a result, many refugees are leaving the camps in search of livelihoods within the region.

Our research found that many Tanzanians in Kigoma are willing to help refugees, offering support through shelter, work referrals, short-term hosting, and even fostering children. However, legal and social risks complicate these efforts. Tanzanians who assist refugees may face criminalization under strict regulations, financial burdens, and a lack of formal recognition for their help. Consequently, even those who want to help may hesitate, balancing compassion with the potential consequences of their actions.

Refugees outside the camps, often without legal documentation, remain vulnerable to exploitation, harassment, and the constant risk of exposure. Many, particularly Burundians, rely on informal work to survive but sometimes face exploitation by Tanzanians who may withhold payment or threaten to report them. This fear of exposure has deepened mistrust, making refugees cautious about revealing

their status and increasingly turning to each other for support.

This “refugees helping refugees” approach includes established refugees teaching newcomers skills to stay safe, offering Kiswahili lessons, emotional support, and shelter. For effective assistance, a legally recognized framework for collaboration—such as the previously established common market—is essential to protect both groups. Currently, support between refugees and nearby communities largely relies on relationships of mutual trust, which helps them navigate legal restrictions and avoid exploitation, fostering a supportive environment as both groups seek essential support.

### The Way Forward

#### The Government of Tanzania should:

- Allow refugees in camps to cultivate crops within and around the camps.
- Reopen the common market within the camps or develop a legal framework that recognizes and supports collaboration between refugees and host communities.
- Regularize some of the refugees who reside in the city.
- Follow the UN's Kigoma Joint Programme (KJP 2022-2027).

#### The International Humanitarian Actors should:

- Provide fuel supplies in the refugee camps to support refugees' cooking needs in camps.
- Support projects that include refugees and the local population as they help refugees

meet some of their needs not provided in camps.

- Promote UNHCR's 'out of camps' policy.
- Offer culturally appropriate food options for refugees, respecting their preferences and backgrounds.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Everyday Humanitarianism in Tanzania (EveryHumanTZ) is a joint research project being conducted by researchers from public universities from Denmark and Tanzania aiming to explore and understand the practices of everyday humanitarianism and the attitudes that ground them. The project is based at Copenhagen Business School and at the University of Dar es Salaam, also includes researchers from Danish Institute for International Studies, Roskilde University, University of Copenhagen and London School of Economics. Find out more at <https://www.everydayhumanitarianismintanzania.org/>